

most of these markings concentrated in a conspicuous broad zone around the top of the large end. In shape these eggs are mostly ovate, some elliptical, though a few (c/2) are rather squat and rounded. The lilac-grey markings are mostly not readily perceptible.

Cisticola nigriloris. These five eggs (c/2 and c/3) are distinctive, in colour light turquoise (the c/2 are a bit paler) well spotted all over with light fuscous on underlying light lilac-grey and a tendency to form a cap at top or a definite zone around the top of the large end. The eggs are smooth with slight gloss and ovate in shape. These descriptions, insofar as is possible, follow the colour chart in the *Handbook of North American Birds* (1962) by Ralph S. Palmer.

Reference:

Mackworth-Praed, C. W. and Grant, C. H. B. (1952) *Birds of Eastern and North Eastern Africa*. Volume 1, London.

Sarothrura affinis and some other species on the Nyika Plateau

by C. W. BENSON AND C. S. HOLLIDAY

On the expedition referred to in Vernon's paper, above, the following species were collected in the Northern Rhodesian sector of the Nyika Plateau, the occurrence of which was not accepted by Benson & White (1957), or based only on sight records:—

Sarothrura affinis antonii Madarasz & Neumann.

♂, 7th January, right testis 13 x 6, left 17 x 6 mm., wing 81 mm., stomach contents macerated insect fragments.

Although Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1962) record the species from Northern Rhodesia, we are unaware of any record prior to those now published. We came to associate with it a typically *Sarothrura*-like call, "huuuu", rising in the scale, lasting about two seconds, followed by an interval of about one second, and normally only repeated twice or thrice, though occasionally as many as thirty repetitions were heard. This call was frequently heard at any time of the day and also at night, and was presumed to emanate from the male (occasionally a rattling, tinny note, lasting two or three seconds, impossible to describe at all adequately, presumed to emanate from the female, was heard). It bore a strong general resemblance to those of other *Sarothrura* spp. (*Ibis*, 1956: 598), attributed to males. But it was perfectly distinct, in particular easily told from that of *bozhmi* in being more prolonged, from that of *elegans* in being less so, while unlike that of *lynesei* there was no change in intensity. *Rufa* has also been collected in this area (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 72, 1952: 82), no doubt in lush vegetation by streams, but was not heard. It would be especially valuable if tape-recordings could be made of the very attractive calls of all the *Sarothrura* spp., including *pulchra*, which C. W. B. has heard in the Mwinilunga District, and has been described by Chapin (1939).

Pace Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1962), who record *antonii* as inhabiting marshes as well as moorland at high altitudes, only occasionally short grass, on the Nyika we only noticed it, commonly, in short grass and bracken on quite dry ground between 6,300 and 7,500 feet, and

never on swampy ground near streams. Not only was it identified by voice, but occasionally individuals were flushed, when the red tail of the male can be distinguished. Cave & Macdonald (1955) record it from a grassy hillside in the Imatong Mts., Stoneham *cit.* Jackson & Sclater (1938) from long grass savanna in the Trans-Nzoia District, and Benson (1953) from dry short grass in Nyasaland. On the other hand, Meinertzhagen (1937) did collect it in moorland bogs on Mt. Kenya.

J. M. Feely (*in litt.*) saw a male (red tail discerned in flight) on the Nyika in June; likewise C. B. Cottrell on 7th December. These dates, together with our own for January, and those in Benson (1953), do not suggest that this species has any movements in this part of Africa, unlike certain other Rallidae. As other *Sarothrura* spp., it evidently breeds in the rains. Not only were the testes of our specimen greatly enlarged, but eggs have been collected in eastern Southern Rhodesia in January (Smithers *et al.*, 1959).

Coturnix coturnix africana Temminck & Schlegel.

♂, 4-12 January.

All in breeding condition, as was a female collected across the border in Nyasaland.

Pogoniulus (Viridibucco) leucomystax (Sharpe).

♂, 2♀, 2-10 January.

Sylvia atricapilla atricapilla (Linnaeus).

♀, 2 January.

From edge of evergreen forest. Several males also seen.

Hirundo daurica emini Reichenow.

♀, 6 January.

Ploceus (Xanthoploceus) bertrandi (Shelley).

Adult ♀, with feathered nestling, 10 January; immature ♂, 11 January.

The first two specimens were collected by Vernon at a nest, very like that of *P. xanthops*, made of dry grass, lined with soft plant seed-heads, slung at the end of a *Lippia* bush, eight feet above rank grass and bushes by water, on the edge of a forest patch. In the colour of the head, the immature male agrees quite well with the right-hand figure in plate II, *Ibis*, 1893. The crown and sides of the head are mainly olive, some feathers being margined with blackish, none completely black as in the plate. The nestling is similar in plumage to the immature specimen. Both had the iris pale grey, whereas in the adult female it was yellow.

References:

- Benson, C. W. 1953. *A check list of the birds of Nyasaland.*
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